

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 303168
ORIGIN AF-10

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DRAFTED BY AF/P:BARUSSELL:ADR
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO ALL AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

UNCLAS STATE 303168

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR

SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT PRESS BRIEFING, DECEMBER 20, 1977

FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS FROM DECEMBER 20 PRESS BRIEFING:

Q: IS IT CURRENTLY THE POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES TO
TELL THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT THEY MUST SIGN THE NONPROLI-
FERATION TREATY AND RATIFY IT BEFORE THERE WILL BE ANY
LARGE-SCALE COOPERATION AND FURTHER COOPERATION WITH THE
SOUTH AFRICAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM?

A: LET ME TRY TO PUT SOME CONTEXT ON THIS. THE FIRST
THING IS, WHILE I DON'T HAVE THE EXACT TIME SPAN, WE HAVEN'T
BEEN SUPPLYING SOUTH AFRICA WITH NUCLEAR MATERIAL FOR SOME
TIME. I'LL SEE IF I CAN GET YOU A TIME ON THAT -- SO
THAT IT IS NOT A QUESTION OF CUTTING OFF SOMETHING IN THE
IMMEDIATE PAST THAT WE HAD BEEN DOING. WE HAVEN'T BEEN
SUPPLYING FOR SOME TIME FOR VARIOUS GOOD REASONS, IN-
CLUDING THE FACT THAT THERE HAD NOT REALLY BEEN A CALL
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 02 STATE 303168

FOR IT. I'M NOT PREPARED TO GO INTO THE SUBSTANCE OF
DISCUSSIONS THAT MAY BE ONGOING WITH THE SOUTH AFRICANS
AT THIS POINT EXCEPT TO NOTE SOMETHING THAT THE PRESIDENT
SAID AT THE TIME OF SOME ASSURANCES WHICH WE RECEIVED FROM
SOUTH AFRICA ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF

NUCLEAR WEAPONS, AND THAT WAS THAT, QUOTING HIM, THAT WE
WILL, OF COURSE, CONTINUE TO MONITOR THE SITUATION THERE,
MEANING SOUTH AFRICA, VERY CLOSELY.

"WE WILL," HE SAID, "ALSO RENEW OUR EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE SOUTH AFRICA TO PLACE ALL OF ITS NUCLEAR POWER PRODUCTION CAPABILITIES UNDER INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS AND INSPECTIONS, AND ENCOURAGED THEM ALONG WITH OTHER NATIONS TO SIGN A NUCLEAR NONPROLIFERATION TREATY. GOING BEYOND THAT, WE HAVE LET THE SOUTH AFRICANS KNOW THAT WE WILL REGARD ANY ACTIVITY CONTRARY TO THEIR ASSURANCES ON THE NUCLEAR WEAPONS QUESTION WITH UTMOST GRAVITY, AND WHATEVER POLICY WE ARE PURSUING WITH SOUTH AFRICA OTHERWISE WOULD FALL WITHIN THE PARAMETERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT.

I WOULD ONLY GO ON ALSO TO ADD, TO TRY TO UNDERSCORE ONE THING IN THE PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT, THAT WE ARE NOT ONLY ENCOURAGING SOUTH AFRICA IN THIS AREA, BUT AS YOU KNOW, ARE PURSUING THE SAME POLICY WITH A NUMBER OF OTHER POTENTIAL OR ACTUAL NUCLEAR POWER NATIONS.

Q: RELATED TO THAT, IS THE TEST SITE IN THE KALAHARI TO WHICH THE PRESIDENT REFERRED IN HIS STATEMENT AND WHICH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT. THAT HAS NOT BEEN DISMANTLED, IS THAT CORRECT?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 03 STATE 303168

A: I'M NOT SURE WHAT THE STATE OF PLAY IS. I HAVE NO REPORT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE HAS BEEN A DISMANTLING OF THE FACILITY THAT'S THERE.

Q: DID WE EVER ASK THAT IT BE DISMANTLED?

A: I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT. I'M NOT PREPARED TO DENY IT, BECAUSE I'M SIMPLY NOT AWARE OF OUR ASKING THAT IT BE DISMANTLED.

Q: ARE YOU IN A POSITION TO DESCRIBE THAT FACILITY? WHAT IS IT FOR?

A: ACTUALLY, I AM NOT. WE HAVE SIMPLY BEEN TOLD BY THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT QUESTIONS WHICH AROSE ABOUT IT WERE WITHOUT FOUNDATION INsofar AS THEY RAISED THE SPECTER OF ITS BEING A NUCLEAR WEAPONS SITE.

Q: DOES THE U.S. GOVERNMENT KNOW WHAT THAT FACILITY WAS BUILT FOR?

A: WE HAVE GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES AS TO ITS USE, BUT I AM NOT PREPARED TO GO BEYOND THAT.

Q: DOES THE U.S. GOVERNMENT KNOW FROM INDEPENDENT MEANS WHAT IT IS FOR?

A: I REALLY COULDN'T COMMENT ON THAT.

Q: HAVE YOU TOLD THE SOUTH AFRICANS THAT ANY FUTURE COOPERATION IN THE NUCLEAR FIELD DEPENDED ON THEIR ACCEPTANCE OF -- CURBS (SIC)?

A: I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO COMMENT ON THE SUBSTANCE OF THE DISCUSSIONS WE HAVE HAD WITH THEM IN THIS FIELD. I DON'T THINK, HOWEVER, THAT IT TAKES A GREAT STRETCH OF UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 04 STATE 303168

THE IMAGINATION TO UNDERSTAND WHAT OUR POLICY IS, BASED ON WHAT THE PRESIDENT HAS SAID.

Q: I GATHER THERE IS A REPORT THAT THE AIRPORT IN ETHIOPIA HAS NOW BEEN CLOSED TO CIVILIAN TRAFFIC TO ALLOW THE SOVIET AIRLIFT TO COME IN.

HAS IT INCREASED AGAIN IN THE LAST FEW DAYS?

A: I UNDERSTAND, AS YOU ALL KNOW, THERE HAS BEEN A HEAVY INCREASE OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS IN SOVIET AIRLIFT ACTIVITY IN ETHIOPIA.

I DON'T THINK THERE HAS BEEN A SUBSTANTIAL INCREASE IN THE LAST COUPLE OF DAYS, THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THAT.

Q: HODDING, DO YOU HAVE THE FIGURES FOR THE CUBAN AND RUSSIAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA?

A: THE BEST I CAN GIVE YOU ON THAT IS THAT -- LET ME START OFF WITH WHERE THE FIGURES WERE AND TELL YOU ROUGHLY WHERE WE THINK THEY ARE.

BEFORE THE AIRLIFT BEGAN IN LATE NOVEMBER WE BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE ABOUT 400 CUBANS, ABOUT 250 SOVIET MILITARY ADVISERS, IN ETHIOPIA.

Q: THAT IS WHEN?

A: LATE NOVEMBER.

Q: THE FIGURE WAS 100.
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 05 STATE 303168

A: YES, BUT BY LATE NOVEMBER I THINK THEY THEN HAD IT UP TO 250.

THAT IS CORRECT. WHEN I GAVE YOU THAT READ OUT BEFORE THAT 100 WAS THE FIGURE AND THEN 250.

INFORMATION AVAILABLE TO US NOW INDICATES THAT IN RECENT WEEKS THEN THE TOTAL NUMBER OF SOVIET AND CUBAN MILITARY ADVISERS IN ETHIOPIA HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED. THAT IS THE ACCUMULATIVE TOTAL. AND PERHAPS EVEN TRIPLED.

NOW, THERE IS A PROBLEM HERE. I MEAN I AM OBVIOUSLY NOT BEING VERY PRECISE WITH YOU. THE REASON IS THAT WE DO NOT FEEL CAPABLE OF BEING VERY PRECISE NOW. THE DOUBLE FIGURE I WOULD TAKE AS A GIVEN. HOW MUCH MORE THAN THAT I AM NOT PREPARED TO SAY RIGHT NOW. WE HAVE NO DOUBTS WHATSOEVER THAT THE TOTAL FIGURE HAS INCREASED IN GENERAL IN THAT ORDER OF MAGNITUDE, HOWEVER.

Q: THAT IS DOUBLED FROM THE 650?

A: YES. DOUBLED FROM THE 650.

Q: IS THERE ANY WAY OF QUANTIFYING WHICH OF THAT IS SOVIET?

A: NO.. I WILL TELL YOU I WOULD HAVE DONE THAT IF WE WERE MORE CERTAIN ABOUT IT. WE ARE WORKING ON THAT. WHEN I CAN GIVE YOU A BETTER FIGURE BREAKING DOWN THE TOTAL I WILL.

Q: WOULD YOU SAY THAT THERE ARE SUBSTANTIAL INCREASES ON BOTH SIDES OR IS IT MOSTLY CUBANS?

A: I THINK THEY ARE SUBSTANTIAL ON BOTH SIDES. AS I
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 06 STATE 303168

UNDERSTAND IT, SUBSTANTIAL ON BOTH SIDES.

Q: DO YOU KNOW WHAT THEY ARE DOING?

A: NO, EXCEPT OPERATING AS MILITARY TRAINERS AND ADVISERS.

Q: HAVE YOU ANY INDEPENDENT CONFIRMATION OF THE SOMALIA CHARGE THAT CUBANS ARE INVOLVED IN COMBAT IN THE OGADEN?

A: NO. I DON'T HAVE ANY BETTER GUIDANCE ON THAT THAN I HAD WHEN I SPOKE TO YOU BEFORE, WHICH IS SIMPLY THAT WHILE THE ASSERTION IS MADE CONSTANTLY THE CUBANS ARE NOT INVOLVED IN MILITARY ACTIVITY, THAT THE NATURE OF AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR WORK WILL BRING THEM CLOSER

PERHAPS TO THE ZONE. MAYBE YES, MAYBE NO. BUT WE HAVE NO CONFIRMATION ON MASSIVE CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MILITARY.

Q: COULD YOU GIVE ANY QUANTITATIVE ESTIMATE ON HOW MUCH EQUIPMENT IS BEING BROUGHT IN?

A: NOT YET.

Q: ONCE AGAIN WE HAVE MORE INCREASE IN CUBANS.

WHAT DOES THE SECRETARY FEEL CAN BE DONE TO MOTIVATE MR. CASTRO TO STOP SENDING MORE TROOPS TO AFRICA OTHER THAN WORDS, WHICH WE HAVE BEEN EXCHANGING NOW FOR SEVERAL MONTHS?

A: THERE ARE LIMITED OPTIONS, OF COURSE, AVAILABLE.

Q: WHAT? COULD YOU CITE ONE?

A: I AM SAYING BASICALLY WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS TO MAKE
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 07 STATE 303168

IT CLEAR WHAT THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT IS ABOUT THIS AND WE HAVE MADE IT VERY CLEAR. IT IS VERY NEGATIVE. SECOND, TO RAISE THE POSSIBILITIES OF WHAT SUCH AN INCREASE HOLDS OUT FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR RELATIONS WITH CUBA.

BEYOND THAT, THERE IS NOT TOO MUCH AT THIS POINT THAT IS ENVISIONED.

Q: I WONDERED. WE HAVE CERTAINLY UNTIL THE TUNNEY AMENDMENT, AS I RECALL, WERE POURING EQUIPMENT INTO MR. SAVIMBI WHO SEEMS TO BE VERY SUCCESSFUL AGAINST THE CUBANS, NUMBER ONE, AND NUUMBER TWO WE HAVE CERTAINLY BACKED LIBERATION, SO-CALLED LIBERATION GROUPS IN AFRICA. WHY IS IT THAT WE CAN'T BACK LIBERATION GROUPS IN MIAMI?

A: IT IS A MATTER OF POLICY, AS YOU KNOW, WHICH WE EXPRESSED HERE SOME MONTHS AGO, THAT WE DO NOT WISH TO SUPPORT ASSAULTS ON OTHER PEOPLES TERRITORY FROM OURS.

Q: WHAT IS THE USE OF TYING THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN AFRICA TO IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH CUBA IF CASTRO HIMSELF HAS SAID THAT THERE IS NO LINK AT ALL IN THAT, HE DOESN'T LINK IT?

A: IT TAKES TWO TO TANGO AND WE DO LINK IT.

Q: SO, THAT MEANS THERE IS A STALEMATE IN THE WHOLE PROCESS.

A: IT CERTAINLY CALLS INTO DOUBT, AS I SAID BEFORE, THE WHOLE PROCESS.

Q: DO YOU HAVE RECENT INFORMATION ON THE INTENSITY OF THE AIRLIFT, THE RUSSIAN AIRLIFT TO ETHIOPIA?

UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 08 STATE 303168

A: DO YOU MEAN DO I HAVE A PRECISE READ-OUT ON THE NUMBERS AND ALL THAT?

Q: YES.

A: NO. I DON'T.

Q: IN VIEW OF THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS IN ETHIOPIA, ARE YOU RECONSIDERING YOUR DECISION NOT TO SEND ARMS TO SOMALIA?

A: NO. WE ARE NOT. WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT THIS USE OF OUTSIDE FORCES AND EQUIPMENT IN THIS REGION AT THIS TIME SIMPLY ENLARGES WHAT WE FEEL IS A TRAGIC SITUATION. WE REMAIN COMMITTED TO THE NOTION THAT IT SHOULD BE RESOLVED BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES AND THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF THE OAU'S MEDIATION. WE CONTINUE TO URGE, AS I AM DOING HERE RIGHT NOW, OTHER PARTIES TO SHOW RESTRAINT AND THAT WE OURSELVES WILL CONTINUE TO.

TO ANSWER THE QUESTION, NO.

Q: HAVE YOU AGREED THAT SOME OTHER COUNTRIES SUCH AS IRAN, SAUDI ARABIA, SEND WEAPONS INSTEAD OF THE UNITED STATES?

A: AGAIN I HAVE REALLY GONE THROUGH THIS DRILL. THERE IS NO CHANGE IN OUR POSITION ON THIS.

Q: EVEN IF THE ETHIOPIANS BECOME STRONG ENOUGH TO LAUNCH AN OFFENSIVE WAR AGAINST SOMALIA?

A: AGAIN THE WHOLE POINT OF OUR POLICY IS TO TRY TO BRING THE LEVEL OF COMBAT DOWN TO SEE TO IT THAT THE
UNCLASSIFIED

PAGE 09 STATE 303168

SITUATION IS RESOLVED BY NEGOTIATION. I CAN GO THROUGH THE WHOLE DRILL WITH YOU AGAIN.

YES. WE ARE COMMITTED TO THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF ETHIOPIA, AS WE HAVE SAID BEFORE, AND WE REMAIN SO. WE ARE ALSO COMMITTED TO THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF SOMALIA.

Q: THERE IS ONE SLIGHTLY NEW ELEMENT IN THIS. THE SOVIET PRESS HAS HAD SEVERAL ARTICLES IN THE LAST WEEK OR SO

POINTING OUT THAT ETHIOPIA IF IT WON WACK THE OGADEN WOULD NOT PRESS ON INTO SOMALIA.

HAVE THE SOVIETS GIVEN GOVERNMENT TO GOVERNMENT ASSURANCES

OF THAT KIND?

A: I AM NOT AWARE OF THAT. I DON'T KNOW THAT I WILL BE
IN A POSITION TO GIVE IT, IF I WERE. I DON'T KNOW OF
SUCH ASSURANCES. I SIMPLY DON'T KNOW. THAT IS IGNORANCE
SPEAKING.
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Message Attributes

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